

WEATHER WISDOM

Blizzard warning issued for Martha's Vineyard and Block Island, but still just a glancing blow for New England

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Blizzard Warning

The National Weather Service has issued a blizzard warning for Martha's Vineyard and Block Island as the historical winter storm continues its way up the East Coast. This is due to the wind and snow lowering visibility for three hours or more Saturday evening. It's not a function of a lot of snow.



Winds will also be very strong over much of Cape Cod, where a high wind warning is now in place. Across the North Shore a wind advisory means winds will be strong, but less likely damaging.

Wet snow is likely to weigh down power lines over southeastern Massachusetts and southern Rhode Island. I would have power outage plans in place for tomorrow night in those areas.

There is a coastal flood watch for the high tide Sunday at 11 a.m. along the East Coast of Massachusetts. Flooding should be minor where it does occur.

More updates as conditions warrant.

While the historical storm continues to form today, we will enjoy a nearly perfect January afternoon, with highs in the 20s to lower 30s. Of course, everyone is talking about what is going to take place over the Mid-Atlantic area this weekend, and how we will be impacted here in southern New England.

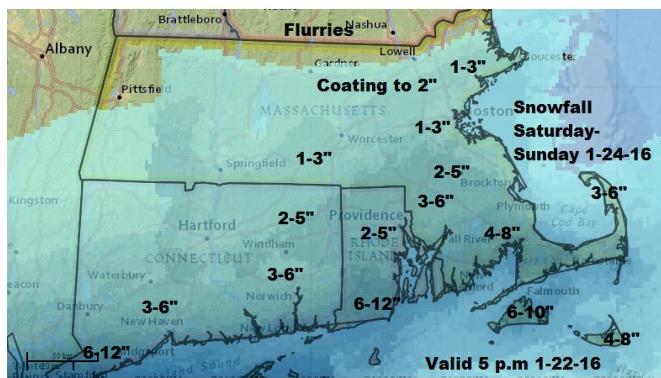


Tweaking the track of the storm

These large systems only need to shift 50 or 75 miles in one direction to change the forecast of snowfall a few inches, and this morning, all of the models have shifted slightly north. You're probably wondering what happens if the models shift even more this afternoon and tonight. Would we end up with a blizzard here?

How much snow?

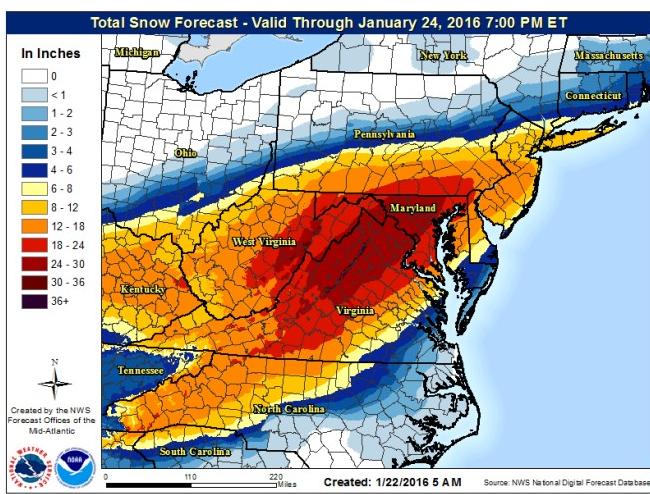
The short answer is that scenario is highly unlikely, but there will be further movement in the predicted track of the storm, and as the flakes begin falling, I'll likely refine the forecast a bit. Presently Boston and the surrounding suburbs look to get 1 to 3 inches of snow, right on that line between a sanding and a plowing.



I wouldn't be shocked, and neither should you, if the amount of snow measured at Logan ends up at slightly under an inch, or slightly over 3 inches. We'd have to see a more dramatic move of the storm northward on this afternoon's model run for Boston to get over 6 inches of snow. This isn't likely.

Over two feet of snow

To the south, this continues to be shaping up for one of those storms people will talk about for generations in places like Washington, D.C., and Baltimore. When you have something this large, wobbles of the track are to be expected.



Winter storm watches

Those of you on the south coast, Cape Cod, Martha's Vineyard, and Nantucket are under a winter storm watch. These are posted when the possibility exists for greater than 6 inches of snow from a storm. If the afternoon information keeps trending north, you can expect these areas to be placed under a winter storm warning.

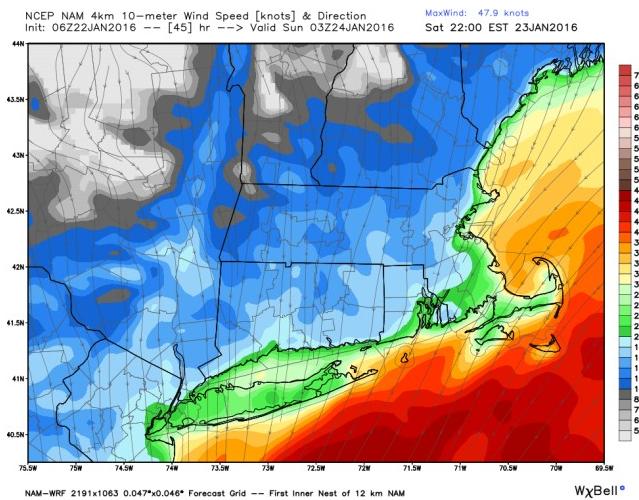


I know it can be frustrating still having us "experts" tell you there might be shifts in a storm, but that's the reality of the limitation of forecasting, even 30 hours before a storm begins. Every professional in this business hates

making even small changes to the accumulation maps, believe me.

Coastal Concerns

There is a full moon this weekend, and this means two tide cycles at 11 p.m Saturday and 11 a.m. Sunday. In southern New England, there could be some minor coastal flooding and splash-over, but this won't be a major storm for coastal damage. Winds will be strong and gusty along the immediate coastline (within two miles), and could cause some scattered power issues.



Snow Timing

Snow moves in south to north during Saturday afternoon and evening. The heaviest snow will fall during the overnight hours Saturday and into early Sunday morning, with sunshine returning by the midday Sunday. Winds will be gusty at times, but it won't be very cold behind this storm. As a matter of fact, we will likely see many areas into the mid-40s by Tuesday, so at least some of the snow we do get will be melting.

I'll update the forecast here and on Twitter @growingwisdom.

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